CAMPAIGN AGAINST
carF
RACISM & FASCISM

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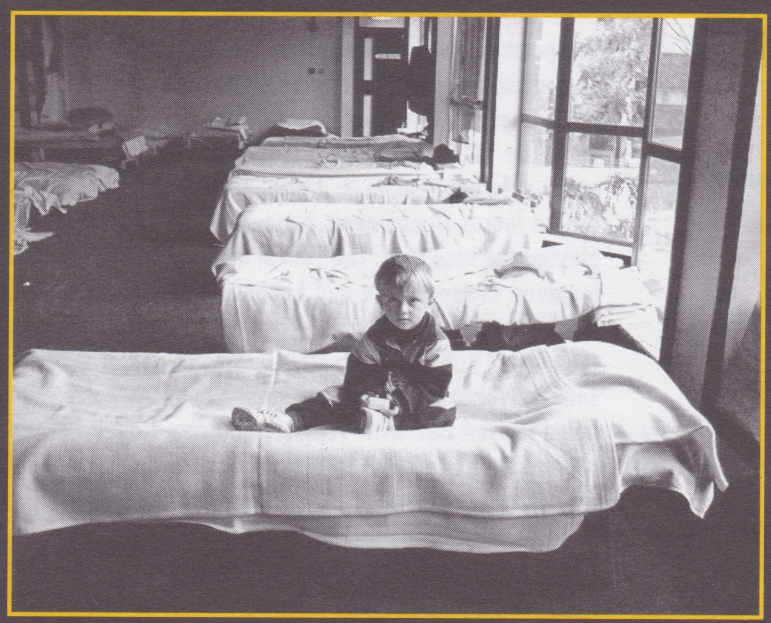

RETURN OF THE NUMBERS GAME

Cover photo: refugee child from Kosovo, one of over 100 asylum-seekers given emergency accommodation in a leisure centre in Brent in north London after the local council said it was unable to find suitable accommodation for them. Photo: Howard J Davies

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CAMPAIGN AGAINST carF RACISM & FASCISM

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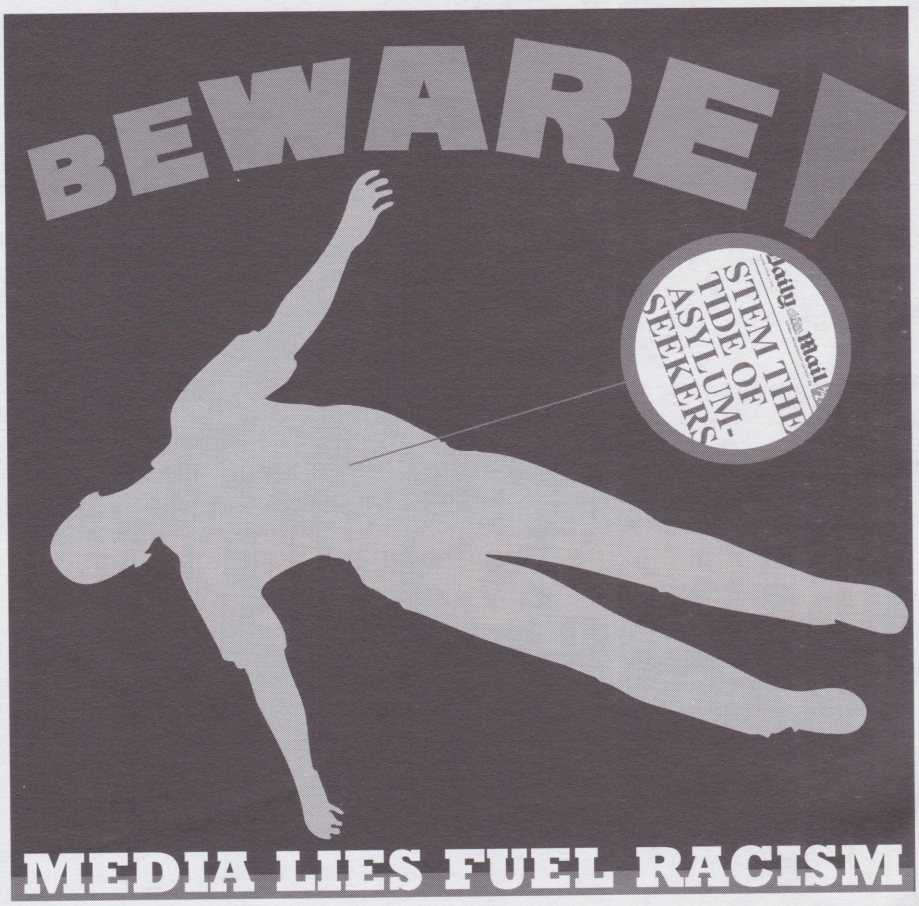
Detention – dispersal – deportation – are fast becoming the three pillars of a common European asylum policy. Although the details will be thrashed out at the Tampere summit in October, the effects of such an EU-wide approach are already being felt on the ground. In this special issue of *CARF*, we draw together reports and case-studies from the UK and Europe to demonstrate the destructive and degrading nature of policies that are based on a total disregard for human rights. We also ask what lessons can be learnt from Dover. For some twenty years, UK politicians have been wary of playing the race card. The 'Dutch auction' so prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, which involved Conservative and Labour leaders in a competition as to which party would let the least immigrants in – through the restrictive legislation of 1962 (Tory), 1965 (Labour), 1968 (Labour), 1971 (Tory) – was, it seemed over. But today, with asylum-seekers taking the place of New Commonwealth immigrants, the same scenario is being played out with Widdecombe-cum-Hague on one side, and Jack Straw on the other. When we come to look back at the new anti-refugee lobby that developed in the UK at the dawn of the millennium, we will say that it all started at Dover. ■



Learning the lessons of Dover

In August, a fairground fight between locals and asylum-seekers brought racial tension in Dover to the nation's attention and led the government to announce that, in future, all new asylum arrivals in Dover would be dispersed across the country. CARF went to Dover to find out what could be learnt from the experiences of asylum-seekers and anti-racists in Kent.

The *Dover Express* calls it 'Shanty Town' or 'Asylum Alley'. The busy main Folkestone Road is not one of Dover's pretty affluent tourist streets. In this traditional working-class part of Dover, asylum-seekers are cramped in bed and breakfast hotels, the line of which is only broken by the presence of several high-rise housing estates. If you were to believe everything the press says, you'd think the Folkestone Road would be literally swamped by young male asylum-seekers, milling around threateningly on street corners. But nothing could be further from the truth. We arrive (mid-day) on the Folkestone Road. And it's empty and quiet, far too quiet for such a sunny day.

'Dover is like a prison. You cannot move,' one asylum-seeker told us, crossing his arms to emphasise his words, as though they were being handcuffed. 'You walk down the road and people are telling you to "fuck off"', said another, adding 'I just say "Thanks". What else can I do, I am just a refugee.'

When we set off on the pleasant suburban train-line from Charing Cross to Dover, our initial aim was to talk to the asylum-seekers, to find out how they felt about living in Dover in the aftermath of the fairground incident. But we soon learned that few asylum-seekers were willing to talk to us, and those who were would only do so if we promised not to reveal their identity. After the fairground incident, journalists swarmed onto the Folkestone Road to conduct interviews. But the asylum-seekers soon found that the journalists were just as ignorant of their plight as the local residents who were attacking them and were left disillusioned and suspicious. Most of the asylum-seekers that CARF did manage to speak to were young men, who all spoke of a common desire 'to get out of Dover'. Those who had been to London to visit friends spoke of the relief at being able to walk down the streets without being harassed. When asked how they spent their time, they just shook their heads and commented gloomily that there was nothing to do. They were too frightened to go out, had no access to recreational facilities. So they spent most of the day in boredom, just sleeping and eating.

The manipulation of ignorance

'They don't want to know what kind of situation we are coming from. I have escaped war and fighting only to come to Dover to be fought again', one refugee concluded bitterly.

And that ignorance of the reasons for refugee flight is, for many of those who talked to CARF, what lay at the heart of the situation that was allowed to develop in Dover. Prior to 1996, when the first refugees from the Czech Republic started to arrive, ethnic minorities in this predominantly white port town comprised just 0.6 per cent of the total population. According to figures released by Kent social services prior to the asylum-seekers dispersal, the 750 asylum-seekers living in Dover

RETURN OF THE NUMBERS GAME

TARGETING TAMPERE

IT'S OFFICIAL

ALL FUTURE ASYLUM POLICY WILL BE STAMPED WITH THE EU TRADEMARK

Campaigners protesting at the European Council summit meeting in Tampere from 14–16 October are clear that the EU is planning 'more controls, more exclusions, more expulsions' as it moves towards 'the politics of deportation'.

The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into force on 1 May 1999, states that asylum and immigration policy (which forms part of justice and home affairs) will now be decided primarily at the European level and not by national governments. The agenda to be discussed at Tampere shows that harmonisation (which must be completed within a five-year period) will mean a levelling down to the lowest common denominator in asylum practice across the EU, and the erosion of refugee rights. For the EU's targeting of specific countries known to abuse human rights with 'action plans', read more collaboration with authoritarian regimes to ensure refugees don't reach Europe in the first place. For proposals designed to influence refugee-producing countries to take back rejected asylum-seekers, read closer contact with the embassies in Europe of refugee-producing countries so that asylum-seekers can be despatched quickly and with minimum publicity. For the introduction of a database on illegal immigrants, read more identity checks and internal controls. And for the introduction of an EU-wide 'returns policy', read more charter flights, more deportations and more deaths. Jack Straw has no doubt been influenced by the final item on the agenda. The proposal for a 'common policy towards integration' deals with the harmonisation of reception conditions so that no country offers better conditions for asylum-seekers than any other. Decentralised counter-activities against Tampere and the politics of deportation, in Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland and the Netherlands, are coordinated by the Kein Mensch ist illegal network. Actions will include a camp at the Finnish-Russian border and, in Koblenz, Germany, a protest outside the HQ of the Federal Border Guard. ■

Kein Mensch ist illegal website: http://www.contrast.org/borders; the coordinating committee can be contacted at AG3F by e-mail: AG3@OLN.comlink.apc.org

comprised just 0.4 per cent of the total population in Dover. Yet since 1996, the *Dover Express* and the *Folkestone Express*, both edited by Nick Hudson (a former editor of the *Sunday Sport*) have continually referred to thousands of asylum-seekers flooding the Kent area and, by sheer dint of numbers, running down the welfare state. Hudson, of course, never once bothered to question why asylum-seekers had fled their homelands in the first place or considered an asylum-seeker as a human story worthy of a sympathetic interview. Rather, in his broadsides, Hudson described asylum-seekers as the 'bootleggers' and 'scum of the earth' 'targeting our beloved coastline'.

With outright hostility, both from Dover council (where no party has overall control, and power is split between Labour and the Tories), and from the editor of the *Dover Express*, what chance of acceptance did the asylum-seekers have? 'People in the streets refer to all refugees as "Slovaks",' Rose Carey of Kent Critical Lawyers, told us. Statistics provided by Migrant Helpline, a charity that was set up to deal with asylum-seekers in the initial stage of arrival, show that asylum-seekers in Dover represent a mixed group, some from the former Yugoslavia, Kurds (mainly from Iraq, Afghans, and Roma from eastern Europe. But the authorities of a town whose white cliffs have become the symbol of English nationalism were not interested in such multiracial subtleties.

From ignorance to violence

By the time the press arrived in Dover to report the fairground incident, the *Dover Express* and national newspapers like the *Sun*, had already framed the way in which the press would situate rising racial tension in Dover. Not one national newspaper bothered to go beyond the superficial to document the long history of racist violence against asylum-seekers which had preceded the fairground fighting in August. Martin Bradley of Dover Residents Against Racism and Norman Setchel, a church minister of the United Reform church which runs a support group and drop in centre for asylum-seekers, both stress that racial violence, particularly in the Folkestone Road, has been an issue locally for the last three years. In some of the worst incidents on the Folkestone Road, asylum-seekers have been pushed in front of moving cars or hit over the head with iron bars. Refugees do not feel safe in the town centre on their own. Nor do

Howard J Davies

they go to the local Folkestone Road pub because, as one refugee put it bluntly 'If you go to the pub, you end up in hospital'. Yet the attitude of the statutory authorities to this whole situation, Martin Bradley told us, was to treat the mounting violence as a 'temporary problem, that would somehow go away'.

Some of the incidents have involved school children as victims as well as perpetrators, others were stoked up by vicious rumours. When the *Dover Express* ran a story in January suggesting that Roma women were running brothels along the Folkestone Road, a young Roma woman was attacked by neighbours who had also started a petition against her, accusing her of being a prostitute. 'There is a perception among people in Dover that all asylum-seekers are shoplifters,' comments Martin Bradley. But again, this is hardly surprising given the stereotypes perpetuated by the local and national press.

Challenging racism

It seems ironic that a port town through which almost twenty million people travel annually has, to use the words of a local MP 'no culture, experience or history of receiving visitors'. Yet despite overwhelming hostility, and various attempts by the National Front to establish a membership, the last few years have seen the development of a much-needed anti-racist network and asylum-seeker support infrastructure in Dover. Daily challenges to racism have come from groups like the recently-established Kent Refugee Action Network, which will act as an overall network for all groups. From responding to racist statements in the local papers, to organising public meetings and street leafleting sessions, these groups have courageously challenged myths and stereotypes about asylum-seekers that would otherwise have gone unchecked. Much of this work involves day-to-day support of asylum-seekers. And Norman Setchel's drop-in centre has clearly become an invaluable focal point for many asylum-seekers, not only for advice but also to socialise with representatives of the other face of Dover, the locals who are attempting, against enormous odds, to provide a welcoming culture.

But what hope have they of bringing about lasting change when their attempts are continually being undermined not just locally but, most importantly, nationally? Where has there been evidence that national politicians have been prepared to lend a supporting voice to those on the ground attempting to establish civilised conditions of reception for asylum-seekers? Most blame should be attached not to local people but to Jack Straw's Home Office, which at first buried its head ostrich-like in the sand, refusing to accept there was a problem, and then, after the fairground incident, quickly reacted by, in effect, endorsing the racists' view. No more new asylum-arrivals would be housed in Dover; instead they would be immediately bussed to Liverpool, Leeds or any other city that would accept them.

But the Home Office and Jack Straw cannot evade their responsibilities to the estimated 800 asylum-seekers who are still trapped in Dover. The message that the government has sent out to those who are hostile to refugees is that they are right to perceive refugees as a problem and that campaigns against them will be rewarded by success. Dover campaigners know that, in such a climate, those who engage in racial violence will prosper. A greater police presence, and the use of CCTV cameras on the Folkestone Road, may help in the short term. But until racism and ignorance are addressed, and until those who manipulate it are brought to book, what future have refugees in Dover, and the other towns like it, across the country? ■

Dover Residents Against Racism and Kent Refugee Action Network can currently all be contacted at Refugee Link, PO Box 417, Folkestone, Kent CT19 4GT

RETURN OF THE NUMBERS GAME

ATTACKS ON ASYLUM-SEEKERS' HOSTELS

Euro hostels targeted

Ever since 1988, when the residents of Sjobo, a small town in southern Sweden, voted in a referendum against providing accommodation for refugees, mobilisations of local communities across Europe against asylum-seekers have become commonplace. While the most notorious incidents were the neo-Nazi pogroms in Hoyerswerda and Rostock in 1991 and 1992, other campaigns in Austria, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway have been orchestrated by narrow-minded local bigots.

According to the refugee support group FFM, petrol bomb and other violent attacks against German asylum-hostels are now creeping up to the same levels as the worst days of the early 1990s. In Holland, where the government disperses asylum-seekers across the country, come more disturbing incidents of popular agitation against a quota system in housing. In Amsterdam, 'Green stays Green' was formed to prevent asylum-seekers being moved to container accommodation in a park because this would mean 'loss of trees and disturbance of the nightingales'. 'Elspeet against Asylum-seekers' have distributed racist literature and daubed buildings earmarked for possible use by asylum-seekers. In the rich seaside resort of Noordwijk, asylum-seekers housed in isolated barns are attacked and abused daily. One asylum-seeker told anti-racists that he prefers to sleep under the bed at night because he feels safer. ■

Background information on racial violence against European asylum hostels is on the web at:
http://www.homebeats.co.uk/resources/refugee.htm

RECENT ATTACKS IN GERMANY

■ **26 April** Arsonists pour petrol into the hall of asylum centre in Fulda; thankfully, it does not ignite ■ **30 April** Incendiary devices thrown into asylum hostel in Zerbst, Sachsen-Anhalt ■ **20 May** Masked attackers armed with baseball bats and screaming 'Niggers get out' break into asylum hostel in Kutenholz, Lower Saxony ■ **26 July** Two young arsonists confess to setting fire to asylum-seekers' home in Wolfsburg ■ **30 August** Petrol bomb attack on asylum-seekers' hostel in Steinbach, Saxony

'Would you like to live here?': pamphlet from Bayerischen Flüchtlingsrates

© Zindel/AK Prager Straße

Neo-nazi attacks on asylum-seekers' hostels in Germany are not the only concern of campaigners. Much accommodation is unfit for habitation, making it difficult to ascertain whether fires are caused by arson attacks or by the lack of basic safety standards. The Bavarian Refugee Council and the Berlin Alliance against the Social Security Law for Asylum-seekers says that asylum-seekers in some hostels are suffering 'systematic starvation' through being issued with poor quality food and not enough water, milk or fresh fruit. At the cockroach-infested Teupitzer Street hostel in Berlin, toddlers and babies are given the same diet as adults. ■

COURT ASYLUM CHALLENGES

Until 23 July, immigration officers would try to send most of those who had arrived in Dover from Calais back to France, telling them to claim asylum there. On that date, the Court of Appeal said that returning them without investigating their asylum claim was illegal, because the French (and German) authorities did not give refuge to those fleeing factions in their country of origin, rather than government forces. The government's response was not to apologise for putting the lives of hundreds of asylum-seekers at risk by returning them to unsafe countries, but to blame lawyers for putting up clever arguments to baffle gullible judges, thus preventing the speedy implementation of their policy. This is the first use of the 'unscrupulous refugee lawyers' alibi for the delays in the efficient throughput of asylum-seekers; we can be sure it won't be the last.

The following week, the Home Office was in the dock again, this time in the High Court. It was being lambasted by Lord Justice Simon Brown for allowing the unlawful prosecution of those asylum-seekers who sought to come in to the UK- or leave it for Canada or the US – on false passports. This is banned by the Refugee Convention, drawn up in 1951, because everyone knew that refugees couldn't get legal documents and would probably have to get into a safe country illegally. The CPS also came in for a drubbing. No government agency, the judge said, had even thought about the Convention during the prosecution, conviction and sentencing of thousands of asylum-seekers in the past five years. It was high time, the judges said, that there was a proper statutory scheme to prevent these prosecutions from taking place.

One immediate result of the High Court's decision in July is a crackdown on those who bring asylum-seekers in. A ruling six months ago by judge Barrington Black at Harrow Crown Court, that the prosecution must prove profit was the motive, has been ignored in Dover.

Those who smuggle refugees in for humanitarian motives rather than for profit are asking why they shouldn't get the benefit of the Refugee Convention's protection too. If the rationale is that recourse to illegal methods is justified in order to seek safety, why should those who provide the means and the route be criminalised? More court challenges are expected. ■

CASE STUDIES IN DISPERSAL

LEEDS: A 'CLUSTER AREA'

The Home Office Task Force on Dispersal, which is encouraging the development of large-scale private sector provision for asylum-seekers, has designated Leeds as one of the 'cluster areas' which will accommodate asylum-seekers when the Immigration and Asylum Bill becomes law. The flagship private sector provider, Angel Heights Developments, has been housing asylum-seekers who have been sent to Leeds by Brent Council under the National Assistance Act.

Angel House is one of its hostels. Asylum-seekers there are provided with no cash and no vouchers. Lumped together without regard to religious or cultural difficulties, they complain that staff have no understanding of their needs. Although Brent Council has a statutory responsibility to assess asylum-seekers' medical and psychiatric needs, among those placed by Brent in Leeds there are a number suffering from severe psychiatric problems, who are not receiving any medical help.

Brent is also refusing to pay travel costs for the asylum-seekers to travel from Leeds to the Home Office in Croydon where they must attend compulsory asylum screening interviews. Failure to attend the interviews can mean immediate rejection of their asylum claim. Tarlochan Gata Aura, who represents some of the asylum-seekers, said that the Home Office refuses to transfer the interviews to Leeds or Bradford and Brent Council refuses to pay for their return travel costs to Croydon. 'How are asylum-seekers to attend compulsory interviews? Should they walk 400 miles, or thieve, or beg?' With the withdrawal of social security benefits from in-country asylum-seekers, the government has reduced asylum-seekers to pauperism. ■

DISPERSAL POLICY IN ACTION

Before the dispersal policy of the Immigration and Asylum Bill has even become law, CARF is hearing complaints about the way that asylum-seekers dispersed by London local authorities are being housed.

Families sent by Haringey to Birmingham and allocated to properties run by private landlords have already had to be rehoused. And the Refugee Arrivals Project, which had sent asylum-seekers to Liverpool where they were housed in two Everton tower blocks bought up by a private landlord, pulled out of the scheme after the asylum-seekers compiled a report detailing poor conditions, abuse and harassment. The tower blocks are now apparently full of asylum-seekers again, this time sent by a number of local authorities under the National Assistance Act scheme. When local MP Louise Ellman tried to inspect the blocks to see the conditions for herself, she was refused access.

The London boroughs of Westminster and Camden send asylum-seekers to hostels in Liverpool and one of them, Catherine House, which houses 120 people, has a particularly harsh regimen. Asylum-seekers claim that hostel staff have abused and assaulted them and then accuse them of making trouble and evict them. To challenge an eviction, asylum-seekers have to travel to London to present their case. As yet, no member of the hostel staff has ever been summoned to justify action in evicting anyone. But once evicted, asylum-seekers have absolutely no form of redress and, unless they can find a local charity to help them, they face a life on the streets. ■

Unlocking asylum

An anthology of writing by refugees on their experience of seeking asylum in the UK

Published by Karibu/WEA Looking Glass Writers.
A4, colour, magazine format, 32pp

To receive a copy please send £5 (inc.p&p) to CARF, BM Box 8784, London WC1N 3XX

Straw's war

The tabloid media and the Tories have been calling for Jack Straw to get tough on asylum, but Straw's real weakness has been his inability to take on the bogus values of middle England

Jack Straw has made it known that racism is one issue that he feels strongly about. In an interview earlier this year, he said that: 'If the only thing that could be said for me was that I made a difference on race, then I'd die a happy man.' Perhaps racism is an issue where Straw senses that New Labour can offer radical change without alienating the cherished middle England vote. And there is no doubt that room for political manoeuvre has been opened up, if the newly discovered anti-racism of the *Daily Mail* is anything to go by. Its support for the Lawrence family has been followed up with the cases of Michael Menson, Ricky Reel and Akofa Hodasi. Similarly, the *Daily Express* has recently run a sympathetic piece on Satpal Ram and led calls against the deportation of Nigerian banker Ben James.

In this new climate, Jack Straw granted the inquiry into Stephen Lawrence's murder, which was grudgingly welcomed, even by the *Mail* and *Telegraph*. But the debate on institutional racism has now given way in these papers to the fear that the police have been overly handicapped by public criticism. Why has the paper which championed Stephen Lawrence not also turned its attention to the cases of black people dying in police custody? It appears that where victims of racism can present themselves as 'respectable' they can win support. Otherwise the *Mail* doesn't want to know.

Stigmatising asylum-seekers

Meanwhile the summer months have seen a wave of criticisms of the government on the asylum issue. Here things are even more clear-cut, since the tabloid press and politicians are all agreed that asylum-seekers are hardly ever genuine. Hence asylum has become nothing more than a law and order issue. Ann Widdecombe has shown that asylum remains one issue where the Tories can get Labour on the run. Even with a Labour government that has been happy to continue the general direction of asylum and immigration policy which began under the previous government – removal of benefits and rights of appeal, and added its own policy of forced dispersal – there has been a chorus of columnists accusing Straw of being too weak. And Straw himself has responded by trying to be as tough as the Tories. The only remaining check on this Dutch auction is the appeal courts – there have been at least eight court rulings against the Home Office on immigration and asylum since the election (see right).

Legitimising suspicions

Added to this are Jack Straw's famed illiberalisms. Over the last four years he has made comments about 'aggressive begging', 'squeegee merchants', 'scousers' and, more recently, travellers, all of whom, he claims, are likely to be criminals and need to be cracked down on. At first glance, these off-the-cuff comments seem to have nothing to do with actual policy and, if anything, are just there to keep up appearances of toughness for the tabloids. But these comments do reveal the nature of the government's law and order agenda. What Straw is effectively saying is that certain groups in society are legitimate targets for suspicion because they are reckoned to be more likely to be involved in crime. And a host of policies and new guidelines have been introduced which give the police new powers to act on suspicion alone (notably the Crime and Disorder Act 1998). But the black experience of policing shows that when police are given blanket powers to act out of suspicion alone, civil rights abuses and miscarriages of justice are the inevitable outcome.

Undermining anti-racism

While Straw has chosen not to mention the black community in this regard, Professor David Smith, his adviser, has argued that it is legitimate for the police to treat the black community with greater suspicion than other groups (see *CARF* 50). But this is precisely what is meant by institutional racism in the police, which the government claims to want to tackle. What this logic leads to is a revival of the Victorian separation between the deserving and the undeserving poor. Only now we also have the undeserving victims of racism, and the undeserving seekers of asylum. These are the black people who you won't read about in the *Mail* because, according to the police, they were on drugs when they died in police custody. And these are the asylum-seekers who have been stigmatised as bogus (now the more politically correct 'abusive'). For them, it is only the first part of Labour's pre-election slogan of 'tough on crime; tough on the causes of crime' that seems to apply and these groups are subject to the full force of state racism.

Ultimately Straw's legacy of anti-racism will be meaningless unless he is prepared to take on causes which don't fit neatly into a middle England world view. ■

RETURN OF THE NUMBERS GAME

COURT JUDGMENTS

against the Home Office in immigration and asylum since the election

OCT 97 High Court rules Home Office wrong to refuse opportunity to adduce late evidence of rape to traumatised asylum-seeker

NOV 97 Court of Appeal rules Home Office wrong to ignore adjudicator's favourable finding in deciding to send back rejected Iranian asylum-seeker

MAR 98 High Court rules Home Office detention of business visitor unlawful

MAR 98 Court of Appeal rules Home Office wrong to ignore medical evidence on effect of deportation of son on elderly and sick mother without obtaining its own medical evidence

DEC 98 Court of Appeal rules Home Office wrong to serve deportation order together with refusal of asylum application, depriving asylum-seeker of appeal rights

FEB 99 Court of Appeal rules Home Office wrong to try to deport asylum-seeker from Azad Kashmir as there is no evidence that political situation makes it safe to return

JUL 99 Court of Appeal rules illegal Home Office attempt to return to Germany and France asylum-seekers who fear persecution from non-state groups

JUL 99 HIgh Court rules prosecution of asylum-seekers with false documents illegal, contrary to Refugee Convention, and says Home Office has not given 'the least thought' to UK's obligations

In the case of Rafiq ur Rehman, the Muslim priest fingered for deportation after refusing to betray his congregations's secrets to MI5, Home Office lawyers argued that the government was the sole arbiter of national security. If they said that fundraising for Kashmir was against Britain's national security, then it was, and the courts couldn't interfere. The Special Immigration Appeals Commission, fortunately, rejected the argument, last deployed during the second world war over the internment of 'enemy aliens', when Lord Atkin told the then home secretary that it was the argument of Humpty Dumpty in *Alice through the Looking-glass*: 'I can make a word mean anything I want it to mean – because I'm the master'.

CLOSE CAMPSFIELD NOW!

On 20 September two Sikh asylum-seekers attempted to escape from Campsfield House detention centre. Unfortunately the attempt was unsuccessful and both men were seriously injured. The men had both been served with deportation orders the day before and were fearful of being sent back to India. One of the men, who had been in Campsfield since January, fell from the top of a 20-foot razor-wired fence onto his head and is now fighting for his life in John Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford. The other man who has severe lacerations to his legs after cutting himself on the wire has been moved to Rochester prison hospital.

Campsfield guards commented that the seriousness of the detainees' injuries would 'stop others escaping'. It won't. The men were due to be sent back to India and almost certain imprisonment and torture. Escape was their only option.

According to Jack Straw, all asylum applications from India are unfounded. The Medical Foundation's recent report *Lives under threat: a study of Sikhs coming to the UK from the Punjab* gives the lie to this claim.

Campaign to Close Campsfield, c/o 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RQ. Tel: 01865 558145/726804/557282

Medical Foundation for the care of victims of torture, 96–98 Grafton Road, London NW5 3EJ. Tel: 0171 813 7777

DEMONSTRATION

The Campaign to Close Campsfield holds regular monthly demonstrations outside the prison. Please attend and show your support for the detainees. The next demonstration 'Escape from Campsfield' will be on

30 October at 12 noon
Campsfield House, Langford Lane, Kidlington

For details, contact the Campaign to Close Campsfield, as above

PUBLIC MEETING

REFUGEES UNDER ATTACK: Public meeting to formally launch the Farhan Mire and Liban Ali family support campaigns and discuss how to fight mounting racial violence against refugees

Wednesday 27 October at 7.30pm
Council Chamber, Camden town hall
Judd Street, London WC1

Further information from National Civil Rights Movement, c/o 14 Featherstone Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2 5AA
Tel: 020 8574 0818

OFFICERS CHARGED IN ALDER CASE

In September, five officers implicated in the death of Christopher Alder faced charges of misconduct in public office, after Christopher was left face down and unconscious on the floor of Queens Road station, Hull in 1998. The case was adjourned until 12 October, when the officers will either face a trial or the case will be adjourned pending the inquest, for which a date has yet to be set.

Carlos Pi-Monasterio

Janet Alder speaking at the NCRM founding conference

In other developments in the investigation, the Chief Superintendent of West Yorkshire police appointed by the PCA to investigate Christopher's death admitted to Janet Alder (Christopher's sister) that he took 'full responsibility' for the destruction on 22 July of clothing that Christopher was wearing on the day he died, potentially vital evidence. ■

Justice for Christopher Alder, c/o Red Triangle Cafe, St James Street, Burnley, Lancashire. Tel: 01282 832 319.

ALTON MANNING: JUDICIAL REVIEW

The family of Alton Manning have been given the right to a judicial review of the CPS decision not to prosecute officers involved in his death. Alton Manning died in Blakenhurst private prison after eight officers used 'control and restraint' procedures when Alton refused to co-operate with an intimate body search. The inquest jury recorded an unanimous verdict of unlawful killing, but the CPS decided that there was not enough evidence for officers to, face charges. ■

Alton Manning Campaign, c/o BRAMU, 393 Dudley Road, Winson Green, Birmingham, B18 4HB. Tel: 0121 454 9500.

ANOTHER DEATH AT STOKE NEWINGTON

In August, 35-year-old Sarah Thomas died in hospital two days after collapsing and suffering a fit in Stoke Newington police station, in Hackney, east London. She was arrested after a chase by plain-clothes officers who allege she was acting suspiciously. Sarah, an architecture student who was only five foot tall, was waiting outside her flat in Finsbury Park in the early hours of 4 August, because she was locked out and waiting for her boyfriend. Witnesses to the arrest say they heard Sarah screaming 'Help me! Help me! They're trying to kill me!'

Paul Doyle, her boyfriend of ten years who saw her in a coma in hospital, says she was covered in scratches and bruises. Police officers did not even have the courtesy to offer Paul a lift to Homerton hospital, instead playing down the seriousness of her arrest, saying that she was 'a bit stressed out'.

Once again the independent PCA has appointed a serving Met police officer, Detective Superintendent Andy Bamber, to investigate his colleagues.

The inquest, which opened on 11 August, heard Bamber give the cause of death as 'irreversible brain damage resulting from a prolonged level of unconsciousness – at this time thought to be drug induced unconsciousness'.

Once again the police version of events paints the victim, Sarah, as some sort of criminal deviant, by alleging that preliminary findings from a post mortem show high levels of cocaine in her blood and urine. These results were in fact released before being fully verified, and are challenged by solicitors acting on behalf of Sarah's boyfriend. ■

Sarah Thomas

As *CARF* goes to press Hackney police are again under investigation for the fatal shooting of a man armed with a wooden table leg.

DEATHS AT STOKE NEWINGTON POLICE STATION

Aseta Simms 13/5/71
Died after being found by police who claimed she was drunk and unable to provide them with a name or address. Aseta was taken to the station and placed in a cell where she died. Unexplained bruising was found on her body.

Michael Ferreira 10/12/78
Died after going voluntarily to the station with friends seeking medical help after being stabbed by a gang of white youths (who were later convicted of manslaughter). The police did not call an ambulance immediately; instead they spent a considerable amount of time questioning the youths about the stabbing. Michael died in the ambulance on the way to hospital.

Colin Roach 12/1/83
Died of a shotgun blast in suspicious circumstances in the station. The inquest ruled that he had committed suicide.

Vandana Patel 29/4/91
Stabbed to death in the domestic violence unit (DVU) at the station after being left alone with her husband, Jayanti Patel.

Oluwashiji (Shiji) Lapite 16/12/94
Stopped by Stoke Newington police for 'acting suspiciously', Lapite collapsed and died after being placed in a police van. According to pathologists' reports, Shiji's body was covered in up to 45 separate injuries.

The inquest recorded a verdict of unlawful killing. No-one has ever been prosecuted despite the inquest verdict, as the CPS repeatedly ruled that there was not enough evidence to secure a conviction. Decisions by the CPS not to prosecute were investigated by Judge Gerald Butler in the recently published Butler report. ■

DEATHS IN CUSTODY

REMEMBRANCE PROCESSION

On 29 October Brian Douglas should have been celebrating his 38th birthday. Instead his family and friends will be remembering his short life and brutal death. Brian died after being struck with a truncheon in May 1995. As yet no-one has had to face any charges in connection with his death. Why? Because those responsible were police officers.

The day after Brian's birthday, the United Families and Friends Campaign will be holding a remembrance procession from Trafalgar Square to Downing Street. The United Families and Friends Campaign is a coalition of family campaigns of those who have died in custody. Their demands are clear: they want justice for their loved ones, the answers as to how and why they died. The march, the first of its kind, is being held to remember all those who have died in suspicious circumstances while in police, prison and psychiatric custody. The families of Christopher Alder, Joy Gardner, Roger Sylvester, Rocky Bennett and others will march behind one banner to remind the powers that be that the fight for justice continues.

The procession marks the start of a number of events taking place over the week (full details below). After the procession the family of Rocky Bennett, who died after being restrained at Norvic Clinic, a psychiatric unit, will travel back up to Peterborough to hold a remembrance service for Rocky. The day after, a cultural day has been organised in his honour. The following week the Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign will be holding a public meeting in the House of Commons. ■

United Families and Friends Campaign and Inquest can be reached at: Ground Floor, Alexandra National House, 330 Seven Sister Road, London N4 2PJ. UFFC: 0370 432439 / 07977 874212. Inquest: 0181 802 7430.

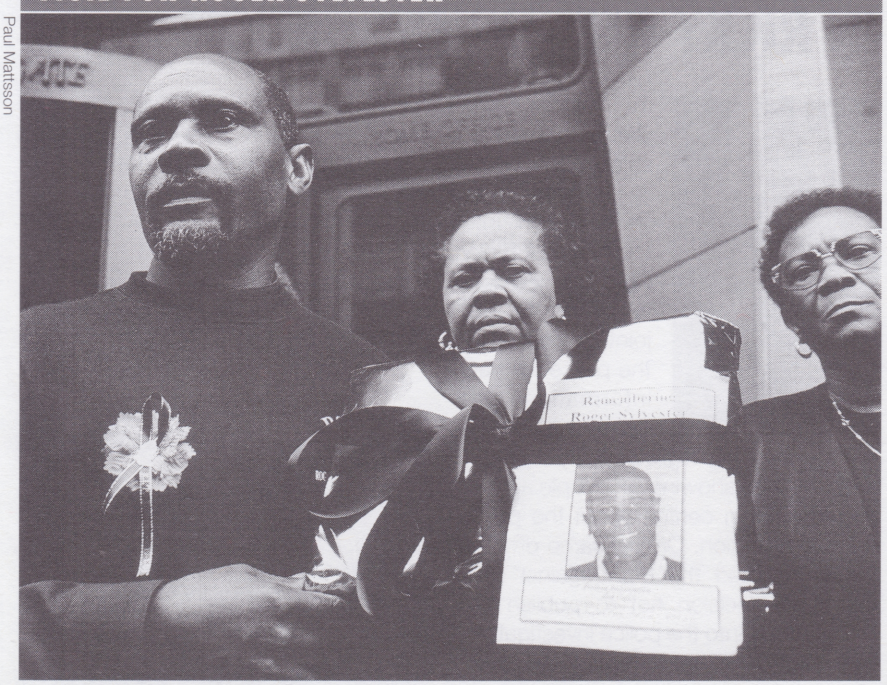
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

30/10/99	Remembrance procession from Trafalgar Square to Downing Street
31/10/99	Cultural Day – Peterborough (organised by family of Rocky Bennett)
11/99	Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign public meeting – House of Commons

For more details, ring UFFC, telephone numbers as above

VIGIL FOR ROGER SYLVESTER

Paul Mattsson



The family and Friends of Roger Sylvester gathered outside the Home Office to honour what would have been his 31st birthday. Campaigners released thirty black balloons to represent each year of his life and a candle – lit vigil ended the event. A petition with 5,000 signatures was also handed in to demand a public inquiry into his death. For more information, contact the Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign, PO Box 25908, London N18 1WU. Tel: 07931 970442. E-mail: rsjc@hotmail.com

REPORT

BUTLER REPORT CRITICISES CPS AND DPP

In August, the long-awaited Butler report into deaths in custody was published. Judge Gerald Butler QC criticised the CPS and former DPP for failing to take responsibility in decisions not to prosecute the officers involved in the deaths of Shiji Lapite and Richard O'Brien. Butler found that Barbara Mills (the former DPP) relied on briefing notes and had not read and considered all the relevant material. A middle ranking CPS lawyer, Robert Monday, who did not even know the definition of manslaughter, made the key decisions on the two cases, decisions that should have been made by more senior solicitors or outside counsel. However, Butler found no evidence that the CPS decision-making procedure was affected by any undue favouritism to the police.

Which begs the question, why have only two officers ever been charged and more importantly, convicted in relation to a black death in custody? (That was in 1969 when Leeds police officers were found guilty of assault after the death of David Oluwale.) ■

UPDATE

FREE SATPAL RAM

Satpal was recently moved from Frankland, Durham, to Full Sutton prison, York, after a demonstration of solidarity outside Frankland on 4 September. In a recent letter from Full Sutton, he wrote: 'The treatment of prisoners at Frankland is brutal and overtly racist. To cover this up the staff fabricate disciplinary charges and 'security information' reports. I have been charged with petty disciplinary offences almost every day while held in segregation at Frankland during the past eight weeks.' The next parole board hearing for Satpal is on 1 December. Previous parole applications have been systematically defeated by prison officers who have suggested that Satpal is a violent and dangerous man. Over the next two months, the Free Satpal Ram campaign will be organising a number of actions to build public pressure in support for Satpal. Look out for an early day motion in the House of Commons, a public meeting and a benefit gig planned for November. ■

For more details contact: Free Satpal Ram campaign, 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 1NH; Web: http://www.ncadc.demon.co.uk/satpal.html.

BLACK STUDENT STABBED ON HOLLOWAY ROAD

During the early hours of 25 September a 17-year-old black-French student was stabbed in the chest in an unprovoked racist attack on Holloway Road, north London. He was with his friend, a 21-year-old Zairean-French student, when they were confronted by a gang of five white men. The men racially abused the pair and one attempted to hold the younger man in a headlock, but he struggled free. They were followed down the road by the gang, who stabbed the younger man and beat up the other. The gang ran off while the older student attempted to flag down cars on the Holloway Road, all of which ignored him. The 17-year-old was taken to Whittington hospital, where his condition was critical for a number of days. He had been in London for a year studying English.

A few days later a witness came forward who saw the attack. The Racial and Violent Crime Task Force is overseeing the police investigation. Police are looking for five white youths who drove off in a white Vauxhall. ■

MENSON SUSPECT IN NORTHERN CYPRUS

As *CARF* goes to press a man is currently on trial in northern Cyprus charged with the murder in London in January 1997 of Michael Menson. In highly unusual circumstances the man is being prosecuted in Cyprus because he absconded and fled there and no extradition treaty exists between the UK and northern Cyprus. In November, also in connection with the murder of Michael Menson, three men are due to go on trial in the UK. ■

The Justice for Michael Menson Campaign can be contacted: c/o National Civil Rights Movement, 14 Featherstone Road, Southall, Middlesex, UB2 5AA. Tel: 0181 843 2333.

STOP PRESS

Allan Cassey, a psychiatric patient, has been remanded in custody charged with the murder of student Stelios Economus. The 20-year-old Middlesex University student was pushed under a train after he had gone to the aid of two black girls who Cassey were being racially abused.
The hearing is set for 29 November. ■

AKOFA HODASI: SUICIDE OR LYNCHING?

24-year-old Akofa Hodasi, a Ghanaian student, was found hanged from a tree on 29 April last year in Frimley, Surrey. The inquest into his death in September heard that three days before he died Akofa and his friend Nathan Evans were racially attacked, and that Nathan needed 17 stitches after being stabbed in the face and neck. One of the attackers also threatened the two men, 'You're black, I know where you live, and next time I will shoot you'. Akofa was badly shaken by the attack and two days after reporting the incident to the police he was dead.

The forensic evidence heard at the inquest was inconclusive, in that there was no evidence of a struggle. Nor was there evidence that Akofa intended taking his own life, such as a suicide note. But, more importantly, there was no evidence that he climbed the tree – there was no bark or algae on his clothes and the knot on the noose was tied by a right-handed person, while Akofa was left-handed. The police were unwilling to rule out foul play; Detective Superintendent William Harding said that there was a 'possibility that Akofa was strung up'. The inquest recorded an unanimous open verdict.

The family were critical of the police investigation, pointing to similarities between the cases of Stephen Lawrence, Michael Menson and Ricky Reel. They have made a complaint to the PCA about Surrey police and their failure to investigate the racial attack on Akofa and Nathan until it was too late.

The family also allege the police concentrated on minor problems in Akofa's life such as the usual student stresses – exams and money – to explain the apparent suicide. And in one of four searches of Akofa's aunt's home police officers are alleged to have made comments about the number of phone lines in the house, suggesting she may be involved in drug dealing. ■

CCTV FOOTAGE GIVES NEW LEAD IN RICKY REEL INVESTIGATION

In August, the Racial and Violent Crime Task Force re-launched the investigation into the death of Ricky Reel. The Reel family made its first joint appeal with the police for new information and witnesses. CCTV footage from the night of Ricky's murder was released showing six people around Kingston town centre whom the police want to question. On the same day the family picketed the PCA against Paul Condon's decision not to publish the PCA's report into the police investigation. The family and legal team have been allowed to see the report, which is critical of the police, but are not allowed to reveal its contents to anyone else. In the report the PCA apologised for 'weaknesses and flaws' in the investigation and three officers were found guilty of neglect of duty. The inquest into Ricky Reel's death will begin on 1 November at Fulham coroner's court. ■

The Justice for Ricky Reel Campaign can be contacted c/o National Civil Rights Movement, 14 Featherstone Rd, Southall, Middlesex, UB2 5AA. Tel: 0181 843 2333.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

12/10/99	Information appeal on *Crimewatch*
14/10/99	6pm; torchlight procession from Barclays' Bank, Clarence Street, Kingston
21/10/99	Petition to be handed to home secretary at the House of Commons, followed by an early day motion to be moved by John Macdonald MP. The motion urges Paul Condon to release the PCA report into Ricky's death – in line with Macpherson's recommendations calling for greater openness and transparency.

RACISM IN THE RHONDDA

Asian families in the Rhondda Valley have enlisted the help of the National Civil Rights Movement

It was not until the murder of Neath shopkeeper Mohan Singh Kullar in 1994 that the fact of violent racism in Wales was publicly acknowledged. But that was not an isolated case. This year, desperate Asian families, undergoing constant racial harassment in the Rhondda area of South Wales, have enlisted the help of the National Civil Rights Movement.

Sixty years ago, the mining community of the Rhondda Valley welcomed with open arms their black American 'brother', Paul Robeson. He sang with their choirs in public concerts; so impressed was he with their working-class camaraderie (in particular their support for the international brigades in Spain), that he starred in the film *The Proud Valley*. Today, black families are besieged in their homes, are not allowed to run their businesses, cannot walk the streets or let their children go out to play. The Rhondda, its coal mines closed, its poverty endemic and unemployment ever increasing, is a hot-bed of racism.

Isolated and targetted

Black people represent under 1 per cent of the population of the Rhondda and there is often only one Asian family in each town. They are usually middle-class professionals such as doctors or shopkeepers and form easy targets because they stand out and are so obviously isolated. Apart from the murder in October 1995 of Ian Gibbs (a white man who challenged racist attackers of Asians), most of the racial harassment has been low level – verbal abuse or criminal damage. But it is constant. As Helen Whiting of the local Race Equality Council said, 'It's no joke if a brick's coming through your window every week'. And racial bullying in schools has become a very serious issue. South Wales police logged 752 racial incidents last year, an increase of 100 per cent on the previous year's figures. And in the Rhondda 93 instances were reported in 1998/9 as compared with a mere 15 in 1995/6.

Standing up to the Klan

Part of the reason for the increase in racial violence must be down to the way that fascists and organised racists have targeted the Rhondda. The Ku Klux Klan, for example, boasts a branch in the area. And convicted paedophile Allan Beshella, who was a US Klan leader, has lived in Caeran, a former mining village, for some years. Earlier this year, three Rhondda youths, who told police they were members of the KKK, were convicted of assaulting local doctor Sudhir Sarnobat. Rosemary Martin, who runs the Maesteg Citizens Advice Bureau, heads a campaign to get rid of the Klan. The story was reported in *The Times* in July of how she stood up to Beshella and has been harassed ever since: 'excrement through the door, bricks through the window, envelopes with razor blades in them. My daughter had a construction ball put through her car window…' The BNP, which is known to be taking part in racist violence in the Rhondda, is also actively recruiting. In April last year, attempts were made to get it prosecuted for distributing racist leaflets in nearby Swansea.

'There are hideous amounts of racist and fascist graffiti', says a local campaigner, 'and some of it bears European fascist symbols, so someone, somewhere has some knowledge about international fascism'. But we must be careful, he warns, not to believe the racists' own boasts and play up their strength, as the recent BBC Wales programme did. Nonetheless, the South Wales police are sufficiently worried to have set up an intelligence unit to investigate organised racist crime in the Rhondda. ■

WELSH PC DISCIPLINED

A South Wales constable is to face disciplinary charges which could lead to dismissal from the force following a racist attack. Two black students attacked by racist skinheads in Cardiff in August 1997 found themselves arrested and charged with violent disorder. In the event, and probably because the incident was captured on CCTV, the judge dropped the charges and the attackers were charged with racially motivated assault. One was jailed for six months. Black organisations, which had campaigned for an inquiry into the incident, in which the police appeared to ignore the racist abuse of the skinheads and assaulted the black men, spraying one with CS spray, feel that the PCA's recommendations did not go far enough. Hilary Brown of Butetown Citizens Advice Bureau said: 'We think the five officers should be dismissed and criminal charges should be brought against some of the officers.' ■

POLICING

DUWAYNE BROOKS ARRESTED AGAIN

The highly publicised arrest of Duwayne Brooks on charges of indecent assault and attempted rape is the latest action in a long police campaign. Duwayne, the other victim of the racist attack which killed Stephen Lawrence, was arrested by a posse of police in the street on 16 September – weeks after his writ alleging racism and negligence in the investigation of the 1993 attack was served on the Met police commissioner and on 15 named police officers. He was held in custody until the next morning, when he appeared in Greenwich magistrates' court. The press had, of course, been tipped off and were there mob-handed.

Duwayne has been stopped and searched six times in the past year. On one occasion earlier this year he was charged, but charges were dropped before the case went to court. Duwayne's name was not, however, taken off the court list at Tower Bridge magistrates' court, and an obliging court official gave his address (which should be confidential) to a *Sun* reporter.

Police are not as good at protecting Duwayne as they are at detecting alleged crimes on his part. After the Lawrence Inquiry he has received police protection, including video surveillance of his home and a sophisticated silent alarm system linked to the police station. But when his house was broken into recently, it transpired that there was no film in the video camera and the intruders were not identified.

Duwayne was released on bail by the Greenwich court but the charges, which he vigorously contests, remain. Clifford Norris meanwhile had charges of racist wounding dropped against him when his lawyer argued that he would not be able to get a fair trial because of his association with his brother David, a suspect in the attack on Stephen and Duwayne. It's ironic that the perpetrators and their associates appear able to escape trial, citing the prejudice of any jury, while the victim is accorded no such favourable treatment. ■

GERMANY

DOCTORS CHALLENGE DEPORTATIONS

Doctors in Germany are refusing to be implicated in the deportation process

It was the death in May of the Sudanese asylum-seeker, Aamir Mohammed Ageeb, that galvanised the German equivalent of the General Medical Council into issuing a statement warning doctors that those who sanction forced deportations are in breach of medical ethical codes. Ageeb died shortly after being forced by border police at Frankfurt airport onto a flight bound for Cairo. Shackles were placed on his hands and feet, and a motorbike helmet forced onto his head. Doctors believe that the probable cause of death was suffocation caused by the chin straps of the helmet.

Off Limits

Protests after the death of Sudanese asylum-seeker, Aamir Mohammed Ageeb

Direct force = bodily harm

Initially, interior minister Otto Schily announced a thorough investigation and a temporary ban on forced deportations. But a month later, Schily lifted the ban saying that, in future, where direct force is used, 'unrestricted breathing' would be ensured.

This is where the Medical Council came in. Its president Günther Jonitz, criticising Schily, appealed to doctors not to take part in forced deportations declaring that 'all measures using direct force are a danger to life and, as such, constitute bodily harm'. Mindful of the government's previous practice of sedating deportees (Nigerian Kola Bankole died at Frankfurt airport in 1994 after being injected with a huge dose of sedatives), Jonitz warned the government not to resort to the practice of sedation in future. The World Doctors' Association has also passed a resolution which states that 'If somebody resists, one is not allowed to make him fit for travel with drugs'.

Criticism did not end there. The Medical Council attacked the quality of medical staff attached to the police service at detention centres, asking whether the treatment of patients is 'reasonable, followed the rules of the medical profession or the needs of the patient'. And in Hamburg, doctors are locked in angry battle with the interior ministry after it implied, in a leaked document, that doctors are issuing medical certificates to deportees on false grounds.

Important precedent

As far as we know, this is the first time that a national Medical Council has come out in such a strong fashion against involvement in the deportation process. Campaigners in the UK and across Europe should write to equivalent medical organisations, pointing to the German doctors' lead. And those involved in monitoring conditions at detention centres should make the practices of their medical staff central to our campaigns. *CARF* will be writing to the General Medical Council and the British Medical Association and urges its readers to contact the regional offices of both organisations. ■

British Medical Association, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1.
General Medical Council, 178 Great Portland Street, London W1.

Off Limits (no. 27) documents all resolutions passed by German doctors' associations against forced deportations. Off Limits, HospitalstraBe 109, 2267, Hamburg, Germany.
Tel: 00 49 (0) 40 3861 40 16.

GLOBALISATION

RIGHT WANTS TO INFILTRATE ANTI-GLOBALISATION CAMPAIGNS

Unless anti-racism and support for progressive movements in the Third World are made central to anti-globalisation campaigns, there will always be a danger of extreme-Right infiltration, warns the Dutch group 'De Fabel van de illegaal'.

In 1997, 'De Fabel van de illegaal' helped to form 'MAI, don't see it, don't want it', against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Soon they were receiving the unwanted support of the extreme Right. 'They speak of solidarity with the Indians and call for cultural diversity. They want to get rid of capitalism and globalisation. And they have read right-wing and left-wing political classics.'

Beware conspiracy theorists

A nationalist students' organisation linked its web-site to the anti-MAI campaign and Rüter, the chief architect of the Dutch New Right, wrote an article in the infamous 'Study, organise and struggle' magazine urging its readers to link up with campaigns against globalisation. De Fabel immediately set out to alert the Left about the dangers of far-Right infiltration. In a series of briefing papers, it warned that unless we are precise in what we oppose when we oppose globalisation, we will attract far-Right conspiracy theorists who see the Jews as the puppet-masters of international capital.

Fighting in the abstract structures of free trade, like the MAI and the World Trade Organisation, is not enough. Unlike the far Right, those on the Left do not oppose these instruments of globalisation because they believe that they are part of an international conspiracy to destroy the nation-state; rather we campaign against the MAI and WTO because they are the instruments of a new imperialism exploiting, ravaging and pillaging the Third World. Campaigns against globalisation must be linked to support for progressive movements in the Third World.

Opposing cultural essentialism

But even that isn't enough. Today's New Right also supports the rights of the indigenous people of the Third World – as long, that is, as they stay in the Third World. The UK environmentalist Edward Goldsmith, who owns and edits the *Ecologist* magazine and is feted by the European Green movement, is also the guru of the New Right, from GRECE, Le Pen's think-tank in France, to the Vlaams Blok's Tekos in Belgium. Goldsmith's environmentalism is based on the view that the world needs a green policy to reestablish a 'natural social order' and the 'traditional relations between people'. Goldsmith, like Rüter, calls for 'ethnic separatism' – a far cry from the Left's belief that the political and social basis of racism must be confronted in order to create a new social order that truly values cultural diversity.

In the final analysis, De Fabel concludes, the problem is not just Rüter and Goldsmith. There is an osmosis of New Right ideas into the Green movement because its own preoccupation with 'authentic cultures' and 'ancient traditions' mirrors much of the cultural essentialism of the New Right. ■

Website: http://www.dsl.nl/media/lokabaal

PGA CONFERENCE IN BANGALORE, INDIA

Peoples' Global Action, the international grouping of anti-globalisation movements, held their second conference in Bangalore at the end of August. PGA were responsible for organising the recent Inter-Continental Caravan of Indian farmers, who visited London earlier this year (see *CARF* 48). With similar concerns to those of the 'De Fabel van de illegaal' group from Holland (see above) the conference voted to amend its manifesto to reject racism, patriarchy and religious fundamentalism. Extra text was also added to clarify that the enemy was both the old and new faces of capitalism, rather than just 'free trade'. ■

USA

OCTOBER CRITICAL POINT FOR MUMIA'S LAST HEARING

A death warrant may be signed at any moment for the execution of imprisoned political activist Mumia Abu-Jamal, according to state officials quoted in a recent article in the *Philadelphia Daily News*. The signing of the death warrant would mean Mumia would be moved from his cell on Death Row into 'Phase II' – where he would be subjected to highly restrictive conditions, including an effective end to any form of communication with the outside world – what his supporters are calling 'censorship by execution'.

Speculation that the warrant is imminent was fuelled when a prison guard ripped the telephone cord out of a wall as the black journalist was giving a live interview to a nationwide radio programme on 12 August. The incident happened during one of the two 15-minute phone calls per week Mumia is permitted by prison regulations. The order to terminate the interview reportedly came 'straight from the top', and supporters fear it may signal the preparation of officers for the introduction of Mumia's effective silencing .

Mumia Abu-Jamal was convicted of the 1981 killing of a white Philadelphia cop, Daniel Faulkner. He and his supporters have maintained that he has been the target of a political frame-up. In 1995, Governor Ridge was forced to revoke a death warrant days before the execution was to take place after 10,000 people marched to stop the execution.

All appeals in the Pennsylvania courts have been denied and Mumia now begins a final round of appeals in the federal courts, which would grant a stay of a death warrant. Critically, the federal district judge does not have to grant him a hearing – the last opportunity for evidence and witnesses denied by the Pennsylvania courts to be admitted before the last appeals begin. If granted the hearing will take place at the beginning of October. Federal law actually encourages judges not to overturn the decisions of state courts, so public action and support for Mumia is essential now if the government is to be pressured into granting a new trial and Mumia's life saved. ■

Websites:
http://mojo.calyx.net/~refuse/mumia/011699whatsnext.html
http://www.mumia.org

1999 DIARY OF RACE AND RESISTANCE

RACISM

4 AUG *30-year-old man charged with murder of Joseph Alcendor in Kilburn, north-west London and remanded in custody* **12 AUG** *35-year-old Paul Knight sent to Broadmoor maximum security mental hospital indefinitely for the murder of disabled 56-year-old Remi Surage, after hearing voices in his head telling him to stab a black man... Two men due to stand trial for murder of Surjit Singh Chhokar in Scotland apply to have trial aborted because they believe publicity surrounding the case would prevent fair trial* **14 AUG** 22-year-old Asian boy stabbed and badly beaten in racist attack outside Club Space in Stratford, East London **19 AUG** 27-year-old Darren Mallett sentenced to two and a half years for unprovoked racist attack involving gang of 25 in February 1998 on Mohammed Faqir and his family in Bristol; five other men due to stand trial for violent disorder walk free after case against them collapses on legal technicality... 21-year-old Carl Webber gets four months for attack caught on CCTV on Asian owned shop in Clifton, Nottingham; his accomplice, 23-year-old Robert Madeley jailed for two months after pleading guilty **20 AUG** Traveller community file complaint against Jack Straw with West Midlands police over comments made about travellers **23 AUG** Zulfqar Ali and his wife escape with cuts after explosion at their Walsall shop caused by arson attack treated as racially motivated by police **25 AUG** Annual report of Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal reveals 160 prosecutions out of 166 reported cases of racially motivated crimes in Scotland **31 AUG** Racist arson attack guts Kentish Town flat owned by Asian couple who escape serious injury… Court of Appeal rejects appeal by 20-year-old John Thomas Monarch against five year sentence for causing GBH with intent on 16-year-old Jalal Ahmed, who suffered a broken nose and cheekbone in the attack in Sunderland

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

1 AUG Essex police investigation into the death of Roger Sylvester completed and handed to PCA member Josephine Dobry to consider **5 AUG** Greater Manchester police send officers on Urdu courses in attempt to improve community relations **6 AUG** Sussex police promise 'quality service' (to prisoners) in partnership with private sector to set up new custody centres… 35-year-old Sarah Thomas dies after being arrested by police from Stoke Newington police station **11 AUG** Butler report into deaths in custody, criticises CPS and former DPP Dame Barbara Mills for not taking responsibility in decisions not to prosecute police officers involved in the deaths of Shiji Lapite and Richard O'Brien **12 AUG** *Officer from Blakenhurst private prison, where Alton Manning was unlawfully killed, sacked for making 'inappropriate racial remarks' to an inmate* **19 AUG** Two Peterborough policemen to face disciplinary charges, following allegations of using racist language and pressurising the woman complainant not to give evidence **20 AUG** Research into CCTV reveals footage of policemen engaged in illegal activities often suppressed by civilian operators, who are also twice as likely to film black people as whites **23 AUG** Two prison officers, 35-year-old Stephen Norton and 44-year-old Seamus Keating, charged with ABH against inmates at Wormwood Scrubs after second police investigation into the prison **25 AUG** Manchester police bring charges of racially motivated harassment against two officers insulting an Asian WPC at a Manchester pub in February 1999 **26 AUG** 56-year-old John Stevens appointed new commissioner of Met police, to take over from Paul Condon in January 2000 **27 AUG** Home Office reveals only 37 black people joined the police force in year from March 1998 to 1999 **28 AUG** Launch of guide for judges to prevent them making racial 'gaffes' **2 SEP** Complaints of racism against Met police officers doubled from April–June 1999 **6 SEP** Carl Pleasance, Peterborough policeman faces charges of assault and ABH for allegedly spraying 35-year-old restaurant worker Tahir Masood with CS spray while giving him a parking ticket **8 SEP** Family of Ahmed El Gammal issue High Court writ against Met Police for £90,000, claiming Leyton police negligence led to his death in 1996… Fife Council will allow lay visitors to conduct spot-checks and interviews with prisoners and officers in eight stations in initiative to make police more accountable **10 SEP** Met police announce partnership with churches to establish 'reporting centres' for racial attacks in churches

LAWRENCE INQUIRY

25 AUG Duwayne Brooks launches action against Met police commissioner Paul Condon for negligence and against Met police for racism, claiming racist treatment by 15 officers after murder of Stephen Lawrence caused him post traumatic stress **6 SEP** Lawyer for Lawrence family, Imran Khan, recommends black people don't join the police force and challenges newly appointed Met commissioner to admit existence of institutionalised racism in police force **7 SEP** 20-year-old Clifford Norris, brother of David Norris, walks free after judge rules he will not receive a fair trial on allegation of wounding Gatri Hassan

IMMIGRATION

13 AUG *Violence erupts in Dover, with local people and refugees fighting on the street, leaving 11 people injured* **17 AUG** John Quaquah allowed to stay in UK to begin damages claim against Group 4 and Home Office after collapse of trial for rioting in Campsfield House last year **18 AUG** Home Office snubs Group 4 and awards contract to run Harmondsworth detention centre to Burns International Security Services, contract to escort detainees goes to Wackenhut UK Ltd **19 AUG** Home Office and Kent county council announce plans to move 800 refugees from Dover to Leeds **20 AUG** Home Office asks Croatian government to reduce number of Croats flying to UK to seek asylum, claiming most are economic migrants **25 AUG** Police deport seven of 19 suspected illegal immigrants caught after raids on addresses in Southampton, Hampshire and West Sussex **27 AUG** Jack Straw imposes three month ban on marches supporting or opposing refugees in Dover… Backlog of 83,000 people awaiting decisions on asylum applications revealed, up 28,000 on this time last year **31 AUG** William Hague accuses Labour of becoming a 'soft touch' for asylum-seekers **2 SEP** Officials claim 100 illegal immigrants found attempting to enter UK in two day operation in Dover **10 SEP** Muslim cleric Shafiq ur Rehman wins fight against deportation, ordered on national security grounds **13 SEP** Special treatment for Kosovan Albanians seeking asylum in UK scrapped after Jack Straw says ethnic Albanians no longer at risk of persecution from Serbs

FASCISM

12 AUG *Evening Standard* reveals registered charities St Michael the Archangel (which runs charity shops in London and north-east) and sister organisation St George's Educational Trust are fronts for the far-right International Third Position **13 AUG** 35-year-old Ian Carstairs escapes jail for racially motivated criminal damage to Christ Church in Bromley by checking himself into Farnborough hospital under Mental Health Act **28 AUG** National Front demonstration in Dover fails to take place after only 14 marchers show up **4 SEP** C18 releases music CD to raise money for Serbian President Milosevic

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